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Region 2 News Clips

Lake Ontario Researchers Finding Cleaner Waterway (OSWEGO COUNTY TODAY; May 14, 2018)

Ongoing research by three New York colleges shows that Great Lakes contaminants continue a welcome and dramatic downward drop, said project investigator James Pagano, director of SUNY Oswego's Environmental Research Center.

Grasse River PCB-removal project advances (GLEN FALLS POST STAR; May 13, 2018)

Arconic's cleanup preparation on the Grasse River is set to resume this month.

Piping plover spraying plan irks environmentalists (NEWSDAY LONG ISLAND; May 13, 2018)

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plans to spray in Suffolk's Smith Point County Park to create a sparsely vegetated habitat for the tiny birds.

NJDEP Encourages Public to Learn More About The Potential For Lead In Water During National Drinking Water Week (CAPE MAY COUNTY HERALD; May 13, 2018)

As part of national Drinking Water Week, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) is working to educate residents about how lead enters drinking water and the steps they can take to reduce any risk to their families.

Report: 200+ NY waterways hit by untreated sewage spills (CNY CENTRAL; May 11, 2018)

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) -- A new report says more than 200 waterways across New York were impacted last year by billions of gallons of untreated sewage and stormwater.

6.5 billion gallons of sewage and stormwater released in NY last year: report (NEW YORK UPSTATE; May 11, 2018)

About 6.5 billion gallons of combined sewage and storm water were released into the environment last year in New York state, according to a new report from the state comptroller.

A beach on Onondaga Lake? Tell the county what you think in survey (SYRACUSE; May 11, 2018)

The Onondaga County Legislature wants to know what you think of building a beach on Onondaga Lake. As legislators decide whether to spend \$440,000 to study and design a beach, Chairman Ryan McMahon is asking for reactions in an online survey.

Measles warning for Englewood and Newark Airport (NORTHJERSEY.COM; May 11, 2018)

Health officials are warning that people may have been exposed to measles in Englewood, Newark Airport and a travel center along Route 80 in Warren County.

Potential measles exposure in Town of Monroe (MID-HUDSON NEWS; May 11, 2018)

There is a potential for measles exposure at a Monroe medical facility as a result of an infected traveler visiting Orange County on April 29.

State Still Struggling with Stormwater Runoff, Can New Bill Help? (NJ SPOTLIGHT; May 11, 2018)

The state is reviving a decade-old idea to help New Jersey address a \$15 billion problem to better manage stormwater runoff, an issue widely recognized as fouling waterways and exacerbating flooding.

Towns push state to do more after natural gas smells cancel outdoor play in North Salem (JOURNAL NEWS; May 11, 2018)

Two northern Westchester towns and another in Putnam County are urging the state to pass tougher regulations for natural gas facilities after air quality concerns forced the cancellation of outdoor school activities in North Salem over two days last month.

No good options on nuclear waste: Editorial (ASBURY PARK PRESS; May 11, 2018)

New Jersey Congressman Leonard Lance fired off a press release Thursday trumpeting his role in breathing new life into plans to establish a national depository for nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain in Nevada.

EPA Holding Info Session On Rolling Knolls Landfill Clean Up (THE PATCH; May 10, 2018)

The EPA will hold two informal hearings on a proposed clean up of the Rolling Knolls Landfill Superfund site next month.

The Plastic Straw Is Losing Status as New York's Big Sipper (THE NEW YORK TIMES; May 10, 2018)

Finally, it's warm enough to walk the streets of New York while nursing an iced coffee, a chilled juice or a cold soda. It's straw season.

Two decades later, Schenectady chemical factory pollution cleanup deemed over (ALBANY TIMES-UNION; May 10, 2018)

The state is giving a Schenectady chemical manufacturer a clean bill of health for dealing with underground pollution at its original factory, some two decades after ordering the company to confront the toxins.

National News

Fuel Economy Standards

CBS News - Trump says he has confidence in Pruitt, in roundtable with auto CEOs

Politico - Chao, Pruitt, Lighthizer join Trump in automakers meeting

Bloomberg - Automakers Seek to Use Trump Summit to Avert War With California

Administrator Pruitt Coverage

Politico - Trump: 'I do' have confidence in Pruitt

Politico - White House: Trump 'pleased' with Pruitt, but must address 'concerns'

Reuters - EPA chief Pruitt's ethics issues have raised concerns: White House

The Hill - Pruitt dined with Cardinal accused of sexual abuse: report

Politico - Carper: Barrasso won't hold hearings on Pruitt

General

Washington Post - Many mocked this Scott Pruitt proposal. They should have read it first. (*Op-Ed)

NPR - Scott Pruitt Praised And Reviled For 'Effectiveness,' But How Effective Is He?

Washington Post - EPA signals it will ban toxic chemical found in paint strippers

AP - EPA study finds arsenic, lead in canyon near Salt Lake City

Full Articles

Region 2 News

OSWEGO COUNTY TODAY

Lake Ontario Researchers Finding Cleaner Waterway

May 14, 2018

Ongoing research by three New York colleges shows that Great Lakes contaminants continue a welcome and dramatic downward drop, said project investigator James Pagano, director of SUNY Oswego's Environmental Research Center.



SUNY Oswego and its Environmental Research Center, teaming up with Clarkson University and SUNY Fredonia, are finding Great Lakes contaminant levels experiencing a welcome drop. The colleges collaborate under the ongoing Great Lakes Fish Monitoring and Surveillance Program, funded by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Shown in the Shineman Center lab, from left, are student researchers Brianne Comstock and Daria Savitskaia; James Pagano, director of the Environmental Research Center; and Andrew Garner, the research associate who manages the lab.

Oswego is a partner with Clarkson University and SUNY Fredonia on a five-year \$6.5 million "Great Lakes Fish Monitoring and Surveillance Program: Expanding the Boundaries" project funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The colleges have been collaborating to monitor such persistent toxic chemicals as PCBs, dioxins, furans and other legacy pollutants since 2006.

"Using data from the 1970s and early '80s, and data we've collected in the current period, we've seen a decline of nearly 90 percent of toxic equivalence in lake trout," Pagano said. The data in large part reflect federal and state programs, from 1970's Clean Air Act and 1972's Clean Water Act to more stringent regulations to dredging to awareness-building campaigns — a widespread effort to improve the Great Lakes.

The ecology of the Great Lakes is a far-ranging concern as the largest group of freshwater lakes on Earth, nearly 94,000 square miles and supporting a population of nearly 38 million people in the U.S. and Canada, the studies noted. The

Great Lakes Fish Monitoring and Surveillance Program began in 1980 to address concerns over the declining state of the lakes and how that impacts the health of those living throughout the region.

The Clarkson-Oswego-Fredonia partnership started on smaller projects in the 1990s, and the current work — which includes \$1.5 million in support for Oswego — is the third round of five-year funding the three institutions have earned from the EPA.

The most recent grant has allowed the team to expand its list of target chemicals and to try to identify new threats before they become potential problems for fish, other lake inhabitants, wildlife and humans who might consume those fish.

The EPA grant supports SUNY Oswego's Environmental Research Center, equipped with high-tech instruments on the fourth floor of the Shineman Center, which not only carries out work for this vital research project, but also provides laboratory experiences for students.

Healthier results

The team's research has most recently appeared in multiple articles in Environmental Science & Technology, with an upcoming piece in the Journal of Great Lakes Research.

"The levels have come down quite a bit," Pagano said. "The news is really good, for the most part."

Research associate Andrew Garner has been a member of the Oswego team since 2012, preparing many of the tissue samples, running the ERC lab and serving as co-author of some work, including second author to Pagano on one article in Environmental Science & Technology.

That piece, "Age-Corrected Trends and Toxic Equivalence of PCDD/F and CP-PCBs in Lake Trout and Walleye from the Great Lakes: 2004-2014," notes that the six contaminants of interest in Lake Ontario lake trout decreased between 45.7 and 55.3 percent — and most by more than 50 percent — during the period studied.

But the work comes with challenging parameters. The team learned it had to correct for one unexpected variable: Some fish in the Great Lakes are living longer, and while this is a positive, it also means the average sample can have a higher level of toxins because the animal's longer lifespan means more time to absorb these compounds.

The EPA vessel Lake Guardian will return to Lake Ontario this summer for a thorough sampling expedition. The ship rotates through the Great Lakes, most recently doing this work on Lake Ontario in 2013.

Other biological sciences faculty at Oswego have key roles in the ongoing project as well. Associate professor James MacKenzie performs toxicology research using liver assays of lake trout, a top predator in Lake Ontario. Professor Richard Back leads a study on contaminants in plankton and other living organisms in the lakebed.

Students on board

Pagano has been able to hire talented students over the years for paid work in the lab, which allows them to benefit from the opportunity to learn and work on such an important project. Some graduates have moved on to professional research positions and doctoral studies.

Senior biochemistry major Brianne Comstock, who has worked in the lab since her junior year, incorporated her activities into her capstone project, "Detection of Dioxin Photoproducts from Triclosan in Biota," which won a Sigma Xi research award in April for Quest.

"I'm really glad to have the experience of working in a lab environment, and to work with really high-tech instruments," said Comstock, who next will pursue graduate studies at St. John Fisher's Wegmans School of Pharmacy. "And the kind of work we do is so applicable and important. ... People need to recognize that if they put something down the drain, it does go somewhere."

Sophomore biochemistry major Daria Savitskaia, in her first semester at the lab, is training to take Comstock's place. "It's really important to learn first how the lab operates," she said. "I've learned there are so many small details to keep in mind when you conduct an experiment."

Even with regulations and higher awareness, and with the valuable work of teams across institutions, the task of cleaning up the Great Lakes is an ongoing one.

"There's still more we can do," Pagano said. "Getting the last 10 percent out of the lake, out of the biota, is going to be hard to do."

SUNY Oswego, its faculty and its students will look to do their part: The campus selected the global issue of Fresh Water for All as its first cross-campus Grand Challenges project.

GLEN FALLS POST STAR

Grasse River PCB-removal project advances

By Bob Beckstead

May 13, 2018

Arconic's cleanup preparation on the Grasse River is set to resume this month.

Officials of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said facility construction that began in 2017 will continue this year. Once finished, the facility will be used as a staging area to support dredging and capping operations as part of the \$243 million project to remove polychlorinated biphenyls from the river in St. Lawrence County.

The EPA had selected a plan in 2013 to clean up river sediment by dredging and capping it in a 7.2-mile stretch of the river. However, the facility must be constructed and engineering plans and other design work completed before dredging can begin.

Arconic Inc. — formerly Alcoa — is performing the work, with the oversight and coordination of various components by the EPA, the state Department of Environmental Conservation and the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe.

Last spring, Arconic began construction of the staging area to be used to unload the sediment dredged from areas near the shore of the river. The area will also be used to stage and load clean materials with which to backfill dredged areas and to cap the river bottom during the in-river cleanup. The staging area is near the intersection of County Route 42 and Route 131.

In addition, Arconic has expanded the permitted, licensed, on-site Arconic Massena West landfill to store dredged sediment and other materials generated during the construction and river cleanup work.

As this year's work season nears, plans include completing a sheet pile wall at the staging area and construction of a dock facility. Project officials also expect to remove a small amount of sediment along the shoreline next to the staging area and remove soil in two areas along the north shore of the river near the Alcoa bridge.

Work is also expected to include reopening of a secure landfill for disposal of shoreline sediment and soil and performance of an in-river capping test in small areas near the staging area.

About 109,000 cubic yards of sediment will be dredged from near-shore areas of the river. In the river's main channel, about 59 acres of sediment will be covered with an armored cap and about 225 acres of contaminated sediment will be capped with a mix of clean sand and topsoil.

"Our ability to protect people's health and the environment is most effective when we work together and engage our local communities from a foundation of trust and transparency," EPA Regional Administrator Pete Lopez said in a

statement. "Working collaboratively with the Indian Nation, the state, local governments and the community, we can get much accomplished as we meet our shared challenges head on."

Officials from the EPA will provide an update on the work during a public information session scheduled for 7 to 8 p.m. Wednesday at the Massena Community Center, 61 Beach St. They'll also answer any questions about construction of the cleanup support facility.

The next meeting will be held in Akwesasne in June, and monthly meetings will be held in Massena or Akwesasne while the construction work is underway.

NEWSDAY LONG ISLAND

Piping plover spraying plan irks environmentalists

By David M. Schwartz

May 13, 2018

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plans to spray in Suffolk's Smith Point County Park to create a sparsely vegetated habitat for the tiny birds.



A sign lets visitors know that they should not enter a restricted area at Smith Point County Park where birds are nesting, May 17, 2017. Photo Credit: Uli Seit

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has provoked complaints from environmentalists with a plan to begin spraying herbicides on Fire Island in Suffolk's Smith Point County Park this fall to create sparsely vegetated habitat for the piping plover.

The proposal would kill vegetation around the dunes using the herbicide glyphosate to create the preferred nesting and foraging grounds for the tiny shorebirds, according to an application the Army Corps filed with Suffolk County in December. Federal and state authorities have designated the plovers as threatened.

A pilot plan for the Corps to treat about 30 vegetated acres of dune grass and phragmites, a nonnative reed, was ratified May 3 by a county committee that regulates the use of pesticides on county-owned property.



The panel in February blocked a broader Corps plan to treat 173 acres in the park, although not all the acres have vegetation.

The Corps missed an April 1 deadline to spray this spring. The agency will apply the pesticides in the fall and next spring, said Corps spokesman James D'Ambrosio.

Adrienne Esposito, executive director of the nonprofit Citizens Campaign for the Environment, said, "We were appalled" by the original 173-acre proposal. Esposito's group, based in Farmingdale, has a representative on the pesticide management committee.

Esposito said de-vegetating the 173 acres could reduce the stability of dunes. Spraying also could harm other plants and animals on land and in waterways, she said.

The original Army Corps plan was "way too cavalier about destroying vegetation on a dune system, not only for stability but for ecological health," Esposito said.

Esposito called the smaller pilot plan a "reasonable compromise to offer some protection for a threatened species to survive."

The Army Corps said it needs to spray because of a \$207 million dune strengthening project between Fire Island Inlet and Moriches Inlet that has prevented breaches and overwashes that keep down vegetation.

"This unintended consequence has the potential to adversely affect the Piping Plover population within the project area," D'Ambrosio said in an email. He said the spraying program would not cause dune erosion.

The approved spraying plan allows the Army Corps, which is acting at the direction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to treat portions of two sites. It originally had sought to spray at five locations. Spraying will now occur along the ocean side in the Great Gunn area to kill any vegetation present, and on the bay side at New Made Island to remove phragmites, according to Suffolk County planning director Sarah Lansdale. The approval also limits how much pesticide the federal government can use.

Federal officials said they attempted in 2014 and 2015 to remove vegetation without using herbicides, but the plants persevered.

In one area, the agency used heavy machinery to scrape away the vegetation, which grew back. In another location, the Corps placed a heavy tarp over the plants.

"This effort was not successful as the vegetation was able to grow through the tarp and keeping the edges from getting blown up was a factor as well," Peter Wempler, chief of the environmental branch of the Army Corps of Engineers, said in an application letter to Suffolk County.

"It has been documented that mechanical vegetation removal without herbicide application will not and has not worked," Wempler said.

Jillian Liner, director of conservation for Audubon New York, which had sued the federal government for failing to adequately protect piping plovers, said that the group supports the use of herbicides in some cases.

"Audubon New York can be supportive of the use of herbicides as a last resort when other methods are not successful," Liner said in an interview. The suit has been settled.

Suffolk County officials said they expect the federal government to reapply next year for the full 173-acre project, but D'Ambrosio would not say whether the Corps will seek the permission. The Corps will have to ask the Suffolk committee again next year for permission to spray, county officials said.

Suffolk Legis. Rob Calarco (D-Patchogue), whose district includes Smith Point County Park, said he wants the federal government to reconsider its spraying plan.

"I think it's counterintuitive and counterproductive to de-vegetate the dunes. The dune grass is the best natural resource we have to build up the dunes," Calarco said. The dunes "are vital to protect the barrier island, which protects the mainland," he said.

Over the years, piping plover protection efforts have frustrated off-roaders and surf-casting fishermen in Suffolk, who complained of reduced recreational opportunities.

Esposito said her group has supported piping plover preservation efforts, including participating in bird counts and providing volunteers on the Memorial Day and July 4 holidays to protect dune nesting areas from revelers.

But Esposito complained that the use of pesticides to aid plovers effectively protects one species more than others, Esposito said.

An EPA draft study in December found that glyphosate is "not likely" to be carcinogenic to humans.

The World Health Organization concluded in 2015 that glyphosate was a probable carcinogen for humans, but critics said contrary evidence was ignored or omitted.

CAPE MAY COUNTY HERALD

NJDEP Encourages Public to Learn More About The Potential For Lead In Water During National Drinking Water Week

May 13, 2018

As part of national Drinking Water Week, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) is working to educate residents about how lead enters drinking water and the steps they can take to reduce any risk to their families.

"Clean and safe drinking water is important to all of us," DEP Acting Commissioner Catherine R. McCabe said. "As we mark national Drinking Water Week, it's important for families to take a little time to become better informed about how to find out if lead is in their water and what they can do about it."

Drinking Water Week is held each May to draw attention to the importance of drinking water and the efforts that government and system operators take to ensure safe and reliable supplies. Drinking Water Week is sponsored by the American Water Works Association and its members.

In New Jersey, NJDEP is responsible for enforcing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Lead and Copper Rule. NJDEP evaluates results of testing done by water systems at properties most likely to contain lead. If more than 10 percent of the result are above 15 parts per billion, the water system will conduct more frequent sampling and perform corrective actions.

In almost all cases, minute particles of lead enter drinking water as the result of leaching from customers' service lines, internal plumbing, lead-based solder, and certain fixtures. Lead is rarely found in the source of water delivered by water systems.

While lead is a concern in urban areas with older houses and buildings, it can also be a concern in other areas. According to the EPA, lead is more likely to be present in structures built prior to 1986.

Many factors affect the amount of lead that leaches into the water, including lead content of pipes, fixtures, and solder, the length of time that water remains standing in the plumbing; water temperature; pH; and water hardness.

Lead presents health concerns for people of all ages, but particularly pregnant women, infants and young children. If consumers live in homes where lead is in contact with drinking water, they may be at risk of exposure.

A study from the American Water Works Association suggests that lead service lines (lines that connect a system's water mains to properties the system serves) may be present in 6 million to 10 million homes nationwide.

Water systems can adjust water chemistry to reduce leaching of lead into water. Property owners can also take steps to reduce potential exposure to lead.

To determine if lead is present in pipes or plumbing, homeowners or tenants can consult with a licensed plumber or their public water supplier. If you are unsure who your supplier is, go to <https://www13.state.nj.us/DataMiner/Search/SearchByCategory?isExternal=y&getCategory=y&catName=Water+Supply+and+Geoscience>. If lead components are found, it is recommended that property owners explore options for replacing them.

Until lead service lines or plumbing can be replaced, the following steps can be taken to reduce exposure to lead in drinking water:

- Run your water to flush out lead. If a faucet hasn't been used for several hours, run the water for 15 to 30 seconds or until it becomes cold or reaches a steady temperature before using it for drinking or cooking. This flushes any lead particles in water from the pipes.
- Use cold water for cooking and preparing baby formula. Do not cook with or drink water from the hot water tap; lead dissolves more readily in hot water.
- Test the water. Contact your water system or a certified drinking water laboratory to have your home drinking water tested for lead. (Please note that the homeowner may be responsible for any costs).
- Do not boil water to remove lead. Boiling water will not remove lead from the water.
- Use alternate sources or treatment of water. Consider using bottled water for drinking and cooking, or a water filter designed to remove lead. Read the package to be sure the filter is approved to reduce lead or contact NSF International at 800-NSF-8010 or www.nsf.org for information on performance standards for water filters. Be sure to maintain and replace a filter device in accordance with the manufacturer's standards to ensure water quality.
- Get your child tested. Contact your local health department or healthcare provider to find out how to get your child tested for lead if you are concerned about lead exposure.
- Ask your school or child care about their lead sampling results. Any drinking water outlet (i.e. fountain or sink) with a result over the action level of 15 ppb should be taken out of service immediately. Go to <http://www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/schools.htm> for more information on school testing.

Finding information about local water is simple. As required by federal law, water suppliers must provide customers with an annual water quality report, also called a Consumer Confidence Report. This report identifies the quality of drinking water and lists sampling results as well as drinking water standards. Information on each community's local source or sources for drinking water is also provided in the Consumer Confidence Report.

Although customers are directly notified of any violations by their water system, NJDEP's Drinking Water Watch website provides current online access to drinking water data, including water testing results and any violations.

More information about lead in drinking water is available on www.DrinkTap.org and www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/dwc-lead-consumer.html

CNY CENTRAL

Report: 200+ NY waterways hit by untreated sewage spills

May 11, 2018



ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) -- A new report says more than 200 waterways across New York were impacted last year by billions of gallons of untreated sewage and stormwater.

State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli says in a report released Thursday that the health of New Yorkers and their environment suffers when untreated wastewater spills into rivers, streams and coastal areas.

The Democrat says his agency's report found continued problems with combined sewer overflows, which occur when municipal systems get overwhelmed and discharge wastewater directly into waterways.

State auditors found there were 1,900 overflow spills in the state fiscal year 2016-2017, with most of them making contact or having the potential to make contact with a waterway.

DiNapoli says state and local officials must keep addressing aging infrastructure issues through continued funding and better planning.

NEW YORK UPSTATE

6.5 billion gallons of sewage and stormwater released in NY last year: report

By Glenn Coin

May 11, 2018

About 6.5 billion gallons of combined sewage and storm water were released into the environment last year in New York state, according to a new report from the state comptroller.

That sewage reached 220 water bodies, said the report.

"The details are troubling: raw sewage being flushed directly into rivers, streams and lakes that are also used for recreation including boating, swimming, fishing and in some cases, drinking water," the report said.

The problem is that in many communities in New York, from New York City to small towns, storm water runs into sewage systems and overwhelms treatment plants. Anything the plants can't handle during a heavy rain or snow melt ends up in creeks and lakes.

About half of the sewage overflow comes from the New York City system, the report says, while Albany, Buffalo and Syracuse combine for a quarter of the total.

Anytime an overflow occurs, municipalities have to notify the public via a statewide alert system. New federal requirements that go into effect this year will tighten those requirements.

Municipalities are trying to solve the problem in a variety of ways, the report notes, from separating sewers from storm drains to building green infrastructure projects that let water flow into the ground instead of running off into the drains.

Separating the two systems can be expensive: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimated it would cost \$5 billion statewide.

Other options include green infrastructure, such as installing porous pavement so rain percolates into the ground instead of running into the drain system; or so-called "gray" infrastructure, such as large underground storage tanks that hold the runoff until it can be treated after the rain stops.

Projects like those have helped Onondaga County meet a court-ordered mandate to clean up water flowing into Onondaga Lake four years ahead of the deadline.

Still, the report notes, the problem persists. In the last state fiscal year, 1,900 overflows were reported, and 87 percent of those "made contact or potentially made contact with a water body."

Comptroller Thomas P. Dinapoli recommended a new advisory body, the New York State Capital Asset and Infrastructure Council, to help communities rebuild their systems.

SYRACUSE

A beach on Onondaga Lake? Tell the county what you think in survey

By Glenn Coin

May 11, 2018

The Onondaga County Legislature wants to know what you think of building a beach on Onondaga Lake. As legislators decide whether to spend \$440,000 to study and design a beach, Chairman Ryan McMahon is asking for reactions in an online survey.

"The Onondaga Legislature has before us a resolution to accept a state grant to preform a feasibility study for a beach on Onondaga Lake," the survey reads. "As chairman of the legislature I would like to hear directly from you on whether you would like to see a beach on the shores of Onondaga Lake."

So far, the vote is 13 to 7 in favor of a beach on the website, which is run by the Republicans in the legislature. They hold a 12-5 majority.

The county won a \$330,000 grant from the state in December to study whether a beach could be built at the north end of the lake, probably at Willow Bay. To get the grant, the county has to kick in \$110,000 of personnel time.

The legislative Environmental Protection Committee voted 4-0 to accept the grant. The proposal now goes to the Ways and Means Committee before it's voted on by the full Legislature.

The study, to be done by a consultant after bids are received, will examine the best place to build a beach and include design and construction plans.

After the study is done, the Legislature would decide whether to build a beach and for how much.

If the county decides to create a beach, it will need the approval of the state Department of Health. The department's major criteria is the levels of bacteria, and tests have shown for years that those levels are low enough to allow swimming.

NORTHJERSEY.COM

Measles warning for Englewood and Newark Airport

By Lindy Washburn

May 11, 2018

Health officials are warning that people may have been exposed to measles in Englewood, Newark Airport and a travel center along Route 80 in Warren County.

In unrelated incidents, two people who were sick with measles may have exposed others late last month and early this month. Symptoms could develop as late as May 23.

In Englewood, people who visited or were present at the Towne Centre at Englewood apartments, located at 20 W. Palisade Ave., between April 24 and May 2, and people who visited the Renaissance Office Center, at 15 Engle St., on April 30 between 1 p.m. and 3:45 p.m., may have been exposed.

"If you have been exposed, you are at risk if you have not been vaccinated or have not had measles," a statement from the state Health Department said. "Contact a health provider immediately to discuss potential exposure and risk of developing the illness."

In addition, people were traveling through Terminal C of Newark Liberty Airport on April 30 between 11 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., may have been exposed.

The other case involved someone who stopped briefly in the state on April 30 while on a tour bus from Niagara Falls to Washington, D.C.

In that case, anyone who was at the Columbia Travel Center (I-80 at Route 94, 2 Simpson Road) in Knowlton Township on April 30 between 9:45 a.m. and 12:20 p.m. Is at risk.



Information from the CDC about protecting your child from measles (Photo: Federal Centers for Disease Control)

Measles is a highly contagious disease, spread through the air when someone sneezes or coughs or by the mucus or saliva of an infected person. Symptoms include a rash, high fever, cough, runny nose and red, watery eyes.

In some cases, measles can cause pneumonia and swelling of the brain. In pregnant women, measles may cause a miscarriage or a premature or low-birthweight baby.

"Two doses of measles vaccine are about 97 percent effective in preventing measles," said the state epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan.

"Getting vaccinated not only protects you, it protects others around you who are too young to get the vaccine or can't receive it for medical reasons. "

MID-HUDSON NEWS

Potential measles exposure in Town of Monroe

May 11, 2018

There is a potential for measles exposure at a Monroe medical facility as a result of an infected traveler visiting Orange County on April 29.

The county Health Department said that residents who were at the medical office of Dr. Vladimir Zeleno at 745 Route 17M between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., or in the lobby or communal areas of the first and second floor or at BioReference Laboratory in the building between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. on that day may have been exposed to measles.

Measles is a very contagious respiratory, viral illness, spread by contact with nasal or throat secretions of infected persons. The illness starts with symptoms like cough, runny nose, and conjunctivitis, then fever and skin rash.

The rash can appear seven to 21 days after a person is exposed.

A person can spread measles and be contagious from four days before rash onset through four days after the rash appears.

The rash spreads from the head to the trunk to the lower extremities.

Measles is dangerous for young children especially those who have not received two doses of Measles, Mumps, Rubella vaccine. Two doses of MMR vaccine protects 97 percent of vaccinated individuals.

There is no specific treatment against measles.

The county health department advised not to go to a hospital emergency room, urgent care facility or doctor's office without first calling to avoid potentially exposing other people.

NJ SPOTLIGHT

State Still Struggling with Stormwater Runoff, Can New Bill Help?

By Tom Johnson

May 11, 2018

Pollution from stormwater runoff is a \$15 billion problem that won't go away. Stormwater utilities could help Garden State get a handle on the solution



The state is reviving a decade-old idea to help New Jersey address a \$15 billion problem to better manage stormwater runoff, an issue widely recognized as fouling waterways and exacerbating flooding.

Borrowing a concept already in place in more than 40 states, the Senate Environment and Energy Committee approved a bill ([S-1073](#)) to allow towns and counties to set up stormwater utilities as a mechanism for controlling pollution from runoff.

The bill, or some version of it, has been kicked around by lawmakers for years, but has had a tough time winning approval — and when it did, former Gov. Chris Christie vetoed the measure.

Sen. Bob Smith, a Democrat from Middlesex who is chairman of the committee and sponsored of the bill, is cautiously optimistic this time. “We’re not doing any victory laps because it’s going to be a very hard bill to pass,” he said, adding, “this is the best version of a stormwater utilities bill I’ve seen in a long time.”

The stormwater situation

Stormwater runoff has long been recognized as a huge water pollution problem, as well as the most persistent, in the nation's most densely populated state. Aging infrastructure designed to control runoff from parking lots, developments, streets, and farmland fails to prevent a wide array of contaminants, ranging from heavy metals to oil and fertilizer, from finding their way into waterways.

The problem is aggravated by combined sewer-overflow systems in urban areas, which end up spewing as much as 23 billion gallons of untreated sewage into rivers and bays.

The Murphy administration has identified stormwater management as a top priority. Its environmental transition committee even backed the creation of stormwater utilities and subsequent user-fee collections to support infrastructure improvements.

The current bill is permissive, not mandatory, but would allow a county, municipality, or other authority to collect fees to recover costs for managing stormwater. Such fees could be collected from owners of properties, such as parking lots, malls, and developments where runoff originates.

The bill faces opposition from the New Jersey Builders Association, which faults provisions dealing with developers who already have come up with stormwater management plans.

For the most part, environmental groups backed the bill, although some criticized a provision that would exempt agricultural land. Greg Remaud, NY/NJ Baykeeper, said the exemption will greatly diminish the effectiveness of the bill.

Roofs and gardens

Others argued the bill should mandate funding so-called green infrastructure projects, such as rain gardens and green roofs, as well as planting trees to deal with the problem. "This is a \$15 billion problem," said Ed Potosnak, executive director of the League of Conservation Voters. "Having a way to pay for it is critically important."

Chris Sturm, director of policy and water for New Jersey Future, agreed, noting the state's stormwater infrastructure is crumbling. "It is time for New Jersey to join the 40 other states that have authorized stormwater utilities to generate the revenue needed to undertake these costly repairs," she said.

Unlike the past, the state Department of Environmental Protection endorsed the bill.

Besides the utilities bill, there is a measure under consideration in the Assembly to put a \$50 million bond issue on the ballot in November to help pay for stormwater improvements.

JOURNAL NEWS

Towns push state to do more after natural gas smells cancel outdoor play in North Salem

By Thomas C. Zambito

May 11, 2018

Two northern Westchester towns and another in Putnam County are urging the state to pass tougher regulations for natural gas facilities after air quality concerns forced the cancellation of outdoor school activities in North Salem over two days last month.

North Salem joined neighboring Somers and Southeast in Putnam County this week in passing resolutions calling on the state Department of Environmental Conservation to adopt more stringent oversight of natural gas facilities that release emissions into the air.

Outdoor play and sports activities were canceled in North Salem for two days last month after strong “blowdown emissions” were detected coming from a metering station in Southeast operated by Algonquin Gas Transmission, officials say.

North Salem Supervisor Warren Lucas said that during the blowdowns -- venting that relieves pressure in gas lines -- he received a call from several residents, including a jogger who smelled gas near Peach Lake and feared the entire neighborhood was going to blow up.

Others took to a North Salem Facebook page questioning whether the emissions were toxic.

For several years, Lucas has been writing to Algonquin officials, urging them to notify the town ahead of the next “blowdown.” The station is located about a mile and a half north of North Salem schools.

“After the gas release a couple of weeks ago and the panic across a couple of square miles of North Salem and especially at both of our schools I realized something needs to be done to improve the industry practices,” Lucas said. “The industry needs to get into the 21st century and get their act together. NYS DEC and other regulatory bodies need to get updated regulations in place.”

Rick Morrissey, the town supervisor for Somers, shares Lucas’ concern.

Air monitoring

“Of particular concern is the fact that there is currently no air monitoring requirement by DEC at the numerous gas facilities in our communities,” Morrissey said.

The resolutions say current state regulations do not adequately address emissions from gas infrastructure facilities that release into the air “hundreds of tons of pollutants including toxic chemicals.”

The DEC could not immediately be reached for comment about the towns’ concerns. Algonquin officials also could not be reached for comment.

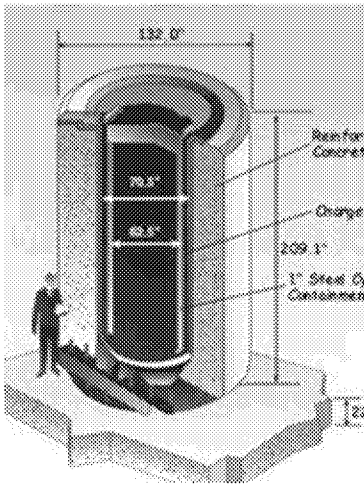
In a letter to Rep. Sean Maloney, D-Cold Spring, Lucas said Spectra, the station’s previous owner, told him it was not required to notify the town of blowdown events because it did not have facilities in the town.

“The Town and School absolutely need to know when blowdowns are occurring, both scheduled and unscheduled, so that we have the knowledge to deal appropriately with any issues that arise,” Lucas wrote.

ASBURY PARK PRESS

No good options on nuclear waste: Editorial

May 11, 2018



Radioactive waste generated by the Oyster Creek power plant is stored in vertical dry casks, where the spent fuel rods are encased in concrete. (Photo: Courtesy of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission)

New Jersey Congressman Leonard Lance fired off a press release Thursday trumpeting his role in breathing new life into plans to establish a national depository for nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain in Nevada.

In a 340-72 vote, the House passed a bill, co-sponsored by Lance, that would have the Department of Energy resume the planning for and construction of Yucca Mountain while allowing the DOE to build or license temporary sites in Texas and New Mexico to store waste while the Yucca project was being completed.

The matter of how to dispose of radioactive waste has particular relevance in New Jersey, where the Oyster Creek nuclear reactor in Lacey is scheduled to permanently cease operations in October. A decommissioning report from plant operator Exelon is expected to be released later this month. It will provide details on how and when the highly radioactive spent fuel rods will be removed from the elevated fuel pool and stored, and a timetable for the completion of the decommissioning process.

Transporting the spent fuel off site to a depository out west would add a new dimension to the decommissioning, not only as it directly relates to Oyster Creek, but to the parts of the state that have been identified as transport routes. That extra dimension would rekindle vocal opposition from state and national environmental groups.

One thing is clear: There are no good solutions for disposing of commercial-grade nuclear waste. About 80,000 metric tons of spent fuel have accumulated at nuclear reactor sites in 39 states. The question is which is the best of the bad alternatives for dealing with the highly radioactive waste: storing it onsite in cement and steel-reinforced dry casks or transporting spent fuel from the 39 states by train, truck and barge?

Environmental groups argue that transporting nuclear waste to a national depository dramatically increases the risk of a disastrous nuclear accident or terrorist attack. They have branded that approach as a "game of radioactive Russian roulette," variously calling the modes of nuclear waste transport "mobile Chernobyls," "floating Fukushimas," "dirty bombs on wheels" and "mobile X-ray machines that can't be turned off."

To date, there is no companion bill in the Senate to the one touted by Lance. And there may not be anytime soon. Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tennessee, reportedly plans to introduce a bill that would emphasize finding potential interim sites rather than focusing on Yucca Mountain. Should that bill, or the one advanced in the House, be approved in the Senate, President Donald Trump would likely sign it into law.

The Trump administration has asked Congress for \$120 million in initial funding to revive Yucca Mountain and Energy Secretary Rick Perry has said the government has a "moral obligation" to find a solution. But the matter would be tied up in the courts for years, if not decades. And it has already been three decades since Yucca Mountain was first identified as the only viable long-term depository. But that viability has been repeatedly challenged, with even the Energy Department arguing against it.

For Oyster Creek, the immediate concern should be moving the spent fuel rods out of the plant's elevated fuel pool as quickly as possible, employing European-style dry casks, which provide better security against terrorism and degradation than the ones typically used in the U.S. New Jersey officials should advocate aggressively for the casks commonly used in Europe.

"I want the 3,000 metric tons of nuclear waste out of New Jersey and consolidated at a national, permanent facility," Lance said after the House vote. "For far too long the federal government has failed to meet its obligation to dispose of used fuel that resides at nuclear plants across 39 states. It is time we resolve the nuclear waste storage problem that has been unresolved for thirty years."

We agree. But playing radioactive Russian roulette isn't the best of the bad alternatives.

THE PATCH

EPA Holding Info Session On Rolling Knolls Landfill Clean Up

The informal session will discuss the proposed cleanup of the Rolling Knolls Landfill Superfund site.

By Katie Kausch

May 10, 2018



The EPA will hold two informal hearings on a proposed clean up of the Rolling Knolls Landfill Superfund site next month.

The informal session is a chance for locals to learn more about the cleanup and to voice their thoughts before a formal plan proposal meeting is held later this summer. Both informal meetings will be held on June 4 at the Chatham Township Municipal building. One will run from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., and a second will run from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Rolling Knolls Landfill is a nearly 200-acre area in the Green Village section of Chatham that was used as an unlined landfill for 30 years. Until 1968, the landfill was filled with "construction and demolition debris, household refuse and scrap metal," the EPA says. That dumping "contaminated soil, sediment, surface water and groundwater with metals, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), pesticides, freon compounds and volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds (VOCs)."

A final clean-up plan will be based on the findings of a site investigation.

For more information, contact Pat Seppi, EPA's Community Liaison, at (646) 369-0068 or by email at seppi.pat@epa.gov.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Plastic Straw Is Losing Status as New York's Big Sipper

By Priya Krishna

May 10, 2018



A customer at the Café Grumpy in Chelsea took a straw but no lid. She said she usually carries a glass straw with her.

Credit: Stephen Speranza for The New York Times

Finally, it's warm enough to walk the streets of New York while nursing an iced coffee, a chilled juice or a cold soda. It's straw season.

But in many quarters, the ubiquitous plastic straw has suddenly become a pariah for the harm it can do to the environment.

The United States alone uses and discards millions of plastic straws every day, according to Eco-Cycle, a nonprofit group that promotes recycling. While straws account for only a small fraction of the single-use plastics in circulation or in landfills, their size and shape make them a threat to marine life; the straws can entrap animals and be swallowed whole by fish.

Online campaigns like Stop Sucking and the Last Plastic Straw have declared war on the straws. Some cities, including Seattle and Malibu, Calif., have banned them. Britain's prime minister, Theresa May, has vowed to outlaw the sale of plastic straws before the end of the year.

In New York, Mayor Bill de Blasio and Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo have railed against plastic bags. (Mr. Cuomo recently introduced a bill to outlaw single-use plastic bags.) But it's not government officials or consumers who seem to be leading the shift away from plastic straws. It's businesses.

Last month, Kerry Diamond began offering paper as well as plastic straws at Smith Canteen, her coffee shop in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn, after talking to her brother Patrick Diamond, who heads the Rise Above Plastics campaign for the New York City chapter of the Surfrider Foundation.



An iced coffee with a paper straw at Smith Canteen in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn. The shop offers both paper and plastic straws with its beverages.

Credit: Stephen Speranza for The New York Times

She said that despite all the online chatter about alternatives to plastic straws, no customer had ever requested one. To her surprise, the restaurant ran out of paper straws in a week. "This is something people wanted more than I anticipated," Ms. Diamond said.

At Inday, three fast-casual Indian restaurants in Manhattan, the owner, Basu Ratnam, has received countless emails from customers asking about his recycling policies and the sustainability of the bowls and cutlery — but none about straws.

In April, after reading reports about how plastic straws contributed to whale deaths, Mr. Ratnam stopped putting them out at Inday's flagship.

"People stopped asking for them," he said. "Straws are a small, nonessential beverage accessory that we found people aren't super attached to. We have been able to change customer behavior without being disruptive." He has since stopped putting out straws at all his restaurants (though customers can get plastic straws on request).

For some businesses, eliminating straws is an aesthetic decision. The upscale Mexican restaurants Atla and Cosme, in Manhattan, offer only metal or paper straws — and only on request.

The beverage director, Yana Volfson, said that because she carefully chooses the glassware, a straw of any kind “would take away from that more visceral experience of a cocktail.” Drinks like a margarita, which has a salt-lined rim, she said, are meant for strawless sipping.



Basu Ratnam, the owner of the three Inday restaurants in Manhattan. Inday has stopped putting out plastic straws but gives them to customers who ask.

Credit: Stephen Speranza for The New York Times

“Why have we made it the norm that every cocktail should be served with a straw, even when someone doesn’t need or hasn’t asked for one?” she said.

When asked, several customers said they favored doing away with plastic straws, but would stop using them only if restaurants took the lead.

“When you order a glass of water at a diner, the waiter just automatically brings the straw,” said Ninna Seerup, 29, who was sipping coffee (sans straw) at Kos Kaffe in Park Slope, Brooklyn. “When you think about it, you don’t need it, but it’s already there.” (On the other hand, she said she found the idea of reusing a metal straw “a bit disgusting.”)

At another table, Louise Laage Toft, also 29, said she loved the protection that straws provide. “When I have a Coke, I like drinking it with a straw so I don’t touch anything to my teeth,” she said. But if plastic straws were banned, she added: “I would be fine with it. The environment is more important than me and my weirdness.”

Still, most establishments continue to hand out plastic straws, which are often cheaper and more durable than their paper siblings. Even some coffee shops, which commonly pride themselves on their green initiatives, seem reluctant to change.

“Our customers are pretty conscientious,” said Caroline Bell, the chief executive and co-owner of Café Grumpy, a local chain that uses environmentally friendly LED lights and compostable coffee bags. She said the company was exploring alternatives to plastic straws.

But asked about dropping straws altogether, Ms. Bell was aghast. "That's crazy," she said. "If there weren't straws, customers would have a meltdown. It would be very hard to get away from them, especially with people commuting."

At a Greenwich Village location of Gregorys Coffee, Emma Stratigos, the store leader, said that while more customers have been bringing reusable cups, she had never seen anyone with a reusable straw.

"Actually, if we run out of straws at a condiment station for, like, 30 seconds, there is an uproar," Ms. Stratigos said. "It's funny, too, because if people need room for milk, they will sip the coffee out of the cup, and then they'll still put on the lid and straw. It's a force of habit."

The only way to render straws obsolete is to redesign lids and cups, said Mr. Ratnam, of Inday. "The onus is on the restaurant owners to work with buyers and manufacturers to come up with a solution that can accommodate the functionality of a straw without using one," he said. "If enough restaurant owners came together, you could force innovation."

New York summers are likely a long way from going completely straw-free, but Ms. Diamond said she was optimistic.

"I imagine that one day when you talk to little kids, they might be like, 'What's a straw?' in the same way that they now don't know what a typewriter is."

ALBANY TIMES-UNION

Two decades later, Schenectady chemical factory pollution cleanup deemed over

By Brian Nearing

May 10, 2018

The state is giving a Schenectady chemical manufacturer a clean bill of health for dealing with underground pollution at its original factory, some two decades after ordering the company to confront the toxins.

In March, the state Department of Environmental Conservation issued what is called a "certificate of completion" to SI Group Inc., for its former plant on Tenth Street where numerous chemicals leaked into the ground for decades until the company ceased operations there in 1997.

Announced by DEC this week, that certificate absolves SI for any remaining contamination "coming at or from the site." The fenced-in, five-acre property can now be reused for industrial or commercial purposes, but no residences can ever be built there.

This comes more than 20 years after DEC first moved against against the company in 1997, which at the time was known as Schenectady International.

DEC said Thursday that the timeframe is not unusual. DEC has been "overseeing this complex cleanup project, which included multiple cleanup phases to ensure the protection of the public and the environment."

The cleanup "involved building demolition of the entire site to determine the full nature and extent of contamination," according to the DEC statement. SI started demolishing the factory in 2004 and finished in 2011.

Also, the project "required relatively new technology and extensive pilot testing of that technology to ensure it would be successful at this site prior to remedy selection and full site implementation," according to DEC.

SI spokeswoman Tara Morgan said there were several reasons for the timeframe, including:

— Because this was an active site up until the late 1990s, some areas were not accessible.

- A remedy to prevent offsite migration of contaminants has been in place and active since 2002.
- Investigations were required in order to identify an effective remedy for onsite contamination.
- SI could not begin work until after DEC has approved the design.

The Tenth Street plant opened in 1908 in the Hungry Hill neighborhood as the Schenectady Varnish Works, the predecessor of Schenectady International. The factory made electrical insulation materials for General Electric and other companies.

Neighbors there had long complained of odors, respiratory problems, strange colors in nearby Cowhorn Creek, and clusters of suspicious illnesses.

In 1997, after years of pollution violations, DEC moved against SI. The two sides signed an agreement (called a consent order) that would require the company to confront pollution at the Hungry Hill facility, as well as at other SI sites in Niskayuna, Rotterdam Junction, and Broadway.

Under that agreement, the company agreed to phase out chemical production at the Tenth Street site.

In 1997, DEC also imposed a \$1.5 million fine on SI and ordered the company to pay another \$200,000 to Schenectady County to support emergency responder services.

At the now-vacant factory site, systems to extract and treat toxic vapors and polluted water from the ground have been installed. Toxins include benzene, a known human carcinogen, as well as xylene, ethylbenzene, phenols, toluene and acetone.

Polluted groundwater is being diverted to underground wells for collection and treatment. Polluted ground has been paved over to keep rainwater from getting into the ground and passing through remaining toxins.

In 1997, DEC officials estimated that work would cost \$3.7 million and take several years, according to a report in the Times Union at the time. It could not immediately be determined how much the cleanup ultimately cost.

Initially, DEC sought \$8 million in penalties against SI and seek repayment of \$500,000 of state expenses in pursuing the company, which prompted SI to threaten to move out of the area, according to a 1991 report in the Times Union.

The company's main plant remains in Rotterdam Junction.

National News

CBS News

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-hosts-roundtable-with-auto-ceos-live-updates/>

Trump says he has confidence in Pruitt, in roundtable with auto CEOs

5/11/18, 12:05 PM, UPDATED 1:32 PM

President Trump hosted a roundtable with auto CEOs at the White House Friday, as the administration looks to roll back environmental regulations for automobiles. During the meeting, with embattled Environmental Protection Agency head Scott Pruitt in the room, a reporter asked if Mr. Trump still has confidence in him.

"Yes, I do, thank you," Trump responded.

Mr. Trump's administration — and Pruitt specifically — has been looking to ease environmental-related regulations on businesses. The deputy White House press secretary said Mr. Trump "will hear from the automaker CEOs about the impact of the rule-making on the auto industry and their efforts to negotiate a "national program" with the state of California."

The White House has made it clear the administration is, despite Pruitt's seeming missteps, quite happy with the EPA head's progress on the president's agenda. White House legislative affairs director Marc Short sat down with CBS News' chief White House correspondent Major Garrett recently, and expressed how Pruitt "has delivered" on the administration's agenda.

"I think that the reality is that there's an ongoing IG investigation at the EPA, but if you look at the way that the director - the administrator, I should say -- has delivered on our agenda and the promises we made, he continues to do it day in and day out," Short said. "So I think that Scott is -- because of the agenda on the environmental front there's plenty -- it's always going to be a controversial issue. And I think he's always going to be a target no matter what."

Attendees included the CEOs of the big three U.S. automakers, including GM's Mary Barra, James Hackett of Ford, Sergio Marchionne of Fiat Chrysler, as well as top executives from global automakers BMW, Mercedes Benz, Toyota, Honda and others.

Politico

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/energy/whiteboard/2018/05/chao-pruitt-lighthizer-join-trump-in-automakers-meeting-1202001>

Chao, Pruitt, Lighthizer join Trump in automakers meeting

By Eric Wolff, 5/11/18, 9:27 AM

The White House released a list of the attendees for this morning's meeting between President Donald Trump and automakers.

The meeting represents a last ditch chance for automakers to persuade Trump to seek a deal with California on a deal to ease fuel economy requirements.

"President Trump looks forward to a productive meeting today with major automakers to discuss the Administration's forthcoming rulemaking on Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) and greenhouse gas (GHG) emission standards for automobiles," White House Spokeswoman Lindsay Walters said in a statement. "The President will hear from the automaker CEOs about the impact of the rulemaking on the auto industry and their efforts to negotiate a 'National Program' with the state of California."

Attendees include Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, and Larry Kudlow, director of National Economic Council.

The following executives from automobile manufacturers and trade associations are expected to attend:

- Mitch Bainwol, CEO of Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers
- Mary Barra, Chairman and CEO of General Motors Company
- Scott Becker, Senior Vice President, Nissan North America
- John Bozzella, President and CEO of Global Automakers
- Bob Carter, Executive Vice President Toyota Motor North America
- Dietmar Exler, President and CEO of Mercedes-Benz USA
- James Hackett, President and CEO, Ford
- Bernhard Kuhnt, CEO of BMW North America
- Sergio Marchionne, Chairman & CEO, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles
- Rick Schostek, Executive Vice President of Honda North America
- Brian Smith, Chief Operating Officer, Hyundai Motor America

Bloomberg

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-11/automakers-seek-to-use-trump-summit-to-avert-war-with-california>

Automakers Seek to Use Trump Summit to Avert War With California

By Ryan Beene and John Lippert, 5/11/18, 4:00 AM

American automakers may be on a mission impossible when they visit the White House on Friday.

They want to persuade President Donald Trump to cooperate with Jerry Brown, the Democratic governor of California, who invoked biblical references when calling the Trump administration's proposal to roll back auto efficiency regulations "profoundly dangerous."

Top executives of General Motors Co., Honda Motor Co., Toyota Motor Corp., Ford Motor Co. and other companies are scheduled to meet Trump to discuss trade and environmental standards enacted by the Obama administration.

The executives plan to emphasize their support for easing the Obama-era standards, but not so much that it triggers a conflict with California and results in a split market of environmental regulations set by Washington and Sacramento.

"We are not asking the administration for a rollback," Ford Chairman Bill Ford said Thursday during the automaker's annual meeting. "We want California at the table and we want one national standard."

Top executives including GM's CEO Mary Barra, Ford's CEO James Hackett, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV CEO Sergio Marchionne, and Rick Schostek, executive vice president Honda North America Inc., are scheduled to press their case with Trump. That meeting will also include Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and economic adviser Larry Kudlow, the White House said in a statement.

The White House said the president looked forward to a productive discussion with the automobile executives.

"The President will hear from the automaker CEOs about the impact of the rulemaking on the auto industry and their efforts to negotiate a 'National Program' with the state of California," Lindsay Walters, White House Deputy press secretary, said in a statement.

The meeting comes against a background of occasionally bumpy relations between Trump and an industry that he championed on the campaign trail.

As a candidate, he repeatedly attacked Ford over its decision to build an automobile plant in Mexico. Three days before Trump's inauguration, Ford announced that it would abandon the plant -- even though construction was underway. The president-elect responded with tweets of praise.

Nafta Concerns

Trump aimed more attacks at GM and Toyota over manufacturing plans for Mexico, and both responded by announcing billions of dollars in already planned investments in American plants.

Automakers, parts suppliers and dealers have been wary about the administration's renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement, warning that higher local content requirements could be unworkable and raise vehicle prices.

"Their hand is a bit stronger than perhaps the administration realizes," Adam Jonas, an auto analyst at Morgan Stanley, said Friday on Bloomberg Television. "Those 10 CEOs might represent the better part of 1 million jobs in the United States and indirectly supporting many, many millions more, particularly in states that supported the administration, such as Michigan."

Jones said the automakers definitely want one standard. "And they don't want this going to the Supreme Court and being dragged out in the media and somehow be in the public, affiliated with a kind of hostility toward the world's fifth-largest economy, California," he said.

Trump trade-related tirades also have been a routine issue for the likes of Volkswagen AG, Daimler AG and BMW AG, with Trump blasting Europe's auto trade imbalance with the U.S. and threatening to tax German car imports.

The Friday morning summit is a key milestone in the industry's effort to win relief from the rules that began in the first days of Trump's presidency. Carmakers and their Washington trade groups lobbied the administration to reconsider mileage standards locked in by the Environmental Protection Agency during the final days of Barack Obama's presidency.

Trump granted automakers their wish in March 2017 while laying out an explicit quid pro quo: a promise to cut them a break on environmental regulations in exchange for more hiring in the U.S. Within days, two of the industry's major trade groups published a full-page newspaper advertisement thanking Trump for reinstating a review of the rules.

The EPA completed that review last month and found that fuel-efficiency regulations for cars and light trucks are too stringent and must be revised. Yet a draft that recommended freezing the standards in 2020 showed the administration had something far more aggressive in mind than what carmakers expected, or wanted.

Political Dilemma

It also contained a legal case for denying California the ability to set tougher standards than the national ones -- something that sparked a sharp retort from Brown and other state officials.

Now, blowback from environmental groups and the prospect of a costly legal battle with California have put carmakers in the position of trying to find a middle ground while not coming off as unsupportive of Trump.

"We support standards that increase year over year that also are consistent with marketplace realities," Mitch Bainwol, chief executive officer of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, told a House panel on Tuesday.

In the meeting at the White House, the executives plan to say they'd support standards that grew tougher each year through 2025, not a freeze that the administration is considering.

"Automakers wasted no time rushing to Washington with their deregulatory wish list after Trump's election," Madeline Page, campaign coordinator for Public Citizen, a consumer advocacy group, said in a statement. "Now they're rushing to Washington, D.C., again, this time to try to distance themselves from the administration's deeply unpopular clean cars rollback."

Public Citizen activists plan to drive a 2006 Ford Focus rigged with an ersatz smog plume hovering over the car's roof around Washington on Friday.

'Collision Course'

"The automakers are on a collision course that they charted," Page said.

But, in a letter to Trump on Thursday, three members of his presidential transition team urged him to dismiss the automakers' concerns about legal battles with California and proceed with a rollback.

The current rules will make cars more expensive, limit consumer choice and give California an outsized role in national policy making, wrote Thomas Pyle, president of the Institute for Energy Research; Myron Ebell, director of the Center for Energy and Environment at the Competitive Enterprise Institute; and former Virginia Secretary of Transportation Shirley Ybarra.

"If there is to be one national standard, it makes more sense for that standard to be set by the federal government and not by one state government," they said in the letter. "But that is what is likely to happen if you change direction now."

Politico

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/energy/whiteboard/2018/05/trump-i-do-have-confidence-in-pruitt-1204255>

Trump: 'I do' have confidence in Pruitt

By Anthony Adragna, 5/11/18, 12:45 PM

President Donald Trump said today he continues to have confidence in embattled EPA chief Scott Pruitt.

"Yes, I do," Trump replied when asked if he has confidence in Pruitt today, according to a pool report. They were meeting at the White House with auto executives about fuel economy requirements.

Pruitt is facing a dozen active investigations into various allegations of lavish spending and ethical lapses.

The embattled EPA administrator sat one seat away from the president. White House legislative director Marc Short said earlier this week Pruitt would remain in his post for the "foreseeable future."

Pruitt has faced allegations of lavish spending on his 24/7 security detail, questions over his \$50-a-night condo agreement with the wife of a Washington lobbyist who met with the EPA chief, accusations he sidestepped the White House to give hefty raises to close aides, concerns over his frequent first-class flights and blowback for tightly-controlled events with industry groups that left out the public and the press, among other problems.

During a pair of congressional hearings last month, he largely blamed staff for the ongoing scandals. He'll return to Capitol Hill next week for a May 16 hearing before a Senate Appropriations subcommittee sure to feature additional questions over his behavior. The House Oversight Committee is in the process of interviewing some of Pruitt's closest aides as they investigate the allegations.

Politico

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/energy/whiteboard/2018/05/white-house-trump-pleased-with-pruitt-but-must-address-concerns-1201725>

White House: Trump 'pleased' with Pruitt, but must address 'concerns'

By Alex Guillen, 5/10/18, 7:48 PM

The White House today reiterated its support for Scott Pruitt, but noted the EPA administrator will need to answer for his recent controversies.

"So the president is pleased with the job that he's doing as the EPA Administrator," White House spokesman Raj Shah told reporters aboard Air Force One.

"However, the issues that have been raised that I think you guys are all familiar with, you know, and they have raised some concerns," Shah said. "And we're hopeful and expecting that Administrator Pruitt will be able to answer those."

White House legislative director Marc Short told reporters on Wednesday that Pruitt will be around for "the foreseeable future."

Reuters

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-epa-pruitt/epa-chief-pruitts-ethics-issues-have-raised-concerns-white-house-idUSKBN1IB33R>

EPA chief Pruitt's ethics issues have raised concerns: White House

5/10/18, 6:15 PM

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump is pleased with Scott Pruitt's performance as head of the Environmental Protection Agency but allegations of ethical missteps "have raised some concerns," a White House spokesman said on Thursday.

The White House is hopeful Pruitt will be able to answer those concerns, spokesman Raj Shah told reporters aboard Air Force One en route to Elkhart, Indiana.

Pruitt has been under fire for potential ethics lapses, including flying first class, excessive spending on security, and the rental of a room in a Washington condominium owned by the wife of an energy lobbyist.

"The president is pleased with the job that he's doing as the administrator. However, the issues that have been raised that I think you guys are all familiar with - they have raised some concerns," Shah said.

"We're hopeful and expecting that Administrator Pruitt will be able to answer those," he said.

The EPA has defended Pruitt's spending on travel and security, saying it has been crucial to protecting him from public threats and ensuring he can conduct confidential work, and have also pointed out that Pruitt's lease for the room in Washington, of about \$50 a night he was there, was around market rate.

Pruitt has drawn praise from conservatives during his EPA tenure for rolling back Democratic former President Barack Obama's policy to curb greenhouse gas emissions from power plants and other environmental regulations opposed by industry.

Although Trump has expressed support for Pruitt for his work on scaling back environmental regulations, White House sources have told Reuters officials are worried about the flow of charges against him.

There are nearly a dozen pending investigations into Pruitt with the EPA inspector general, the Government Accountability Office and the White House Office of Management and Budget, as well as the U.S. House of Representatives oversight committee.

The Hill

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/387216-pruitt-met-with-cardinal-accused-of-sexual-abuse>

Pruitt dined with Cardinal accused of sexual abuse: report

By Brett Samuels, 5/10/18, 10:56 PM

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) head Scott Pruitt reportedly dined in Rome last year with a Catholic leader who was under investigation at the time for child sexual abuse, according to newly published records.

The New York Times on Thursday released a series of internal communications obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request that show Pruitt dined at a five-star restaurant with Cardinal George Pell in June 2017. Pell, like Pruitt, has expressed skepticism about man-made climate change.

Documents obtained by the Times show that EPA officials began planning for the dinner in May 2017. Pell had also offered to give Pruitt a tour of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, which apparently did not take place.

The Times reported that none of the EPA schedules from that day noted that Pell was at the dinner with Pruitt.

Prior to the trip, EPA officials learned that Pell was under investigation, according to The New York Times' Eric Lipton.

Pell has since been put on trial related to charges of sexual abuse spanning decades.

The EPA didn't immediately respond to a request to comment from The Hill on Thursday night. Pruitt has come under intense scrutiny in recent months amid a slew of ethics controversies.

Previous reports have revealed that Pruitt racked up millions of dollars worth of travel and security expenses, including reportedly bringing his detail to Disneyland and the Rose Bowl. Pruitt justified his first-class travel by saying it was based on security precautions.

He has also come under fire for renting a Capitol Hill condo from the wife of an energy lobbyist for \$50 each day he stayed there, and constructing a \$43,000 soundproof booth in his office.

During testimony on Capitol Hill last month, Pruitt said those controversies were largely matters handled by his staff or distractions from his agency's efforts to carry out Trump's agenda.

White House deputy press secretary Raj Shah said Thursday that President Trump is "pleased with the job that he is doing." However, the White House has said it is hopeful Pruitt can answer questions about his ethical controversies.

Politico

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/energy/whiteboard/2018/05/carper-barrasso-wont-hold-hearings-on-pruitt-1199184>

Carper: Barrasso won't hold hearings on Pruitt

By Anthony Adragna, 5/10/18, 5:00 PM

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee is not planning to hold oversight hearings on the ongoing ethical woes of EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, the panel's top Democrat said today.

Chairman John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) "is not prepared to hold oversight hearings with Scott Pruitt at this time," Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.) said after speaking with Barrasso.

An aide to Barrasso did not immediately respond to request for comment. The Wyoming Republican has previously said the embattled EPA chief would return to the committee at some point and told POLITICO earlier this week he's "closely monitoring" the situation surrounding Pruitt.

Washington Post

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/many-mocked-this-scott-pruitt-proposal-they-should-have-read-it-first/2018/05/10/31baba9a-53c2-11e8-abd8-265bd07a9859_story.html?utm_term=.c06553bf296f

Many mocked this Scott Pruitt proposal. They should have read it first. (*Op-Ed)

By Robert Hahn, 5/10/18, 8:03 PM

Robert Hahn is a visiting professor at Oxford University's Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment and a non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. He recently served as a commissioner on the U.S. Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking.

When Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt proposed a rule last month to improve transparency in science used to make policy decisions, he was roundly criticized by interest groups and academics. Several researchers asserted that the policy would be used to undermine a litany of existing environmental protections. Former Obama administration EPA officials co-wrote a New York Times op-ed in which they said the proposal “would undermine the nation’s scientific credibility.” The Economist derided the policy as “swamp science.”

But there is a lot to cheer about in the rule that opponents have missed. A careful reading suggests it could promote precisely the kind of evidence-based policy most scientists and the public should support.

Critics typically argue that the proposed regulation would suppress research that contains confidential medical records and therefore scientists could not share underlying data publicly for privacy reasons. Such restrictions, these critics say, would have excluded landmark research, such as Harvard University’s “Six Cities” study, which suggested that reducing fine particles in the air would dramatically improve human health and helped lead to more stringent regulation of fine particles in the United States.

These concerns are likely the result of rhetoric surrounding the rule. Pruitt describes the regulation as an attempt to end “secret science” at the agency. Conservatives have long prioritized the need for making all data and statistical models used in regulatory decision-making available for independent scrutiny, with the intent to limit the use of studies that cannot be replicated. Breitbart went even further, characterizing the action as “a massive victory for both Pruitt and President Trump in their war on the Green Blob.”

But it appears that few defenders or opponents of the proposal have actually read the proposed EPA regulation, which is only seven pages long. Both sides distort the regulatory text.

Here’s what the rule would actually do. First, it would require the EPA to identify studies that are used in making regulatory decisions. Second, it would encourage studies to be made publicly available “to the extent practicable.” Third, it would define “publicly available” by listing examples of information that could be used for validation, such as underlying data, models, computer code and protocols. Fourth, the proposal recognizes not all data can be openly accessible in the public domain and that restricted access to some data may be necessary. Fifth, it would direct the EPA to work with third parties, including universities and private firms, to make information available to the extent reasonable. Sixth, it would encourage the use of efforts to de-identify data sets to create public-use data files that would simultaneously help protect privacy and promote transparency. Seventh, the proposal outlines an exemption process when compliance is “impracticable.” Finally, it would direct the EPA to clearly state and document assumptions made in regulatory analyses.

Here’s what the EPA’s rule wouldn’t do: nullify existing environmental regulations, disregard existing research, violate confidentiality protections, jeopardize privacy or undermine the peer-review process.

The costs of compliance with EPA regulations are substantial. A draft report from the White House Office of Management and Budget suggests that significant EPA regulations imposed costs ranging from \$54 billion to \$65 billion over the past decade. These rules also realize substantial public-health and environmental benefits estimated to range from \$196 billion to \$706 billion over the decade.

Given the stakes for both the cost of compliance with EPA regulations and the real risks that pollution poses to public health and the environment, this rule should be read closely by critics and supporters for what it actually says. Just as transparency in science and evidence are essential, so, too, are intellectual honesty and accurate policy communication.

Taking steps to increase access to data, with strong privacy protections, is how society will continue to make scientific and economic progress and ensure that evidence in rule-making is sound. The EPA's proposed rule follows principles laid out in 2017 by the bipartisan Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking — humility, transparency, privacy, capacity and rigor — and moves us toward providing greater access to scientific data while protecting individual privacy.

Instead of throwing stones, the scientific community should come together to offer practical suggestions to make the rule better. For example, the rule should recognize the incentives for scientists to produce new research. Scientists need to have time to produce and take credit for their research findings. Thus, there will inevitably be a trade-off between the production of new insights and the sharing of data with others, including regulators.

The EPA should also establish use restrictions and a secure data infrastructure so that confidential business and personal data are adequately protected. Finally, it should set procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of this rule. Done right, this could improve government policy not only in the United States but also around the world.

It's still hard to tell how this rule will affect EPA decisions, but one thing is clear: The rule will make the evidence by which we make policy decisions more transparent. The policy might not be perfect, but its benefits will likely far outweigh its costs.

NPR

<https://www.npr.org/2018/05/10/609979515/how-much-scott-pruitt-has-changed-the-epa-is-an-open-question>

Scott Pruitt Praised And Reviled For 'Effectiveness,' But How Effective Is He?

By Nathan Rott, 5/10/18, 5:06 AM

EPA chief Scott Pruitt is praised by industry and conservatives for his aggressive moves to roll back environmental regulations. But how much he's changed the department is debatable.

Transcript

RACHEL MARTIN, HOST:

Scott Pruitt is still the head of the Environmental Protection Agency. That's notable because there have been 11 investigations into his ethics and public spending. President Trump, though, has stood behind Pruitt. The president says the EPA boss is doing a, quote, "great job of getting rid of environmental regulations that he considers to be a burden." But, as NPR's Nathan Rott reports, how much Pruitt has actually changed so far is an open question.

NATHAN ROTT, BYLINE: Love him or hate him, the narrative around Scott Pruitt is that he's highly effective. Conservatives and industry groups applaud him for overseeing the delay, stoppage or review of roughly two-dozen environmental regulations. Democrats and environmental organizations paint him as the most destructive EPA administrator in the agency's history, labeling him with Trump-esque nicknames like Polluting Pruitt. In reality, though...

ERIC SCHAEFFER: I keep hearing how effective Mr. Pruitt is. And what you're really getting are announcements about what he's going to do. He's just pushing the start button.

ROTT: Eric Schaeffer is the head of the Environmental Integrity Project, an environmental nonprofit that is no fan of Mr. Pruitt's, but his point is one that you hear from many quarters - that outside of delaying Obama-era policies on things like emission standards at power plants or slowing their enforcement, few of those policies have actually changed. Scott

Segal, a lobbyist who represents a range of energy companies, says that's partly due to the nature of the governmental beast.

SCOTT SEGAL: Under the best of circumstances, major change in an administration or in the regulatory state takes time.

ROTT: You have to propose what you want to change. You have to take public comment and then address those comments. Then you have to provide documentation of all this because eventually, almost always, you go to court.

SEGAL: It is the courts that are ultimately going to say whether these rules survive or don't.

ROTT: Tom Lorenzen knows this better than most. He spent a decade defending EPA rules at the Justice Department. And he says if an administration wants to change existing environmental rules, they have to explain clearly with evidence why the prior agency's decision was wrong.

TOM LORENZEN: And usually the rules that are rushed out are those that have the biggest troubles in the courts.

ROTT: Lisa Heinzerling, a professor at Georgetown Law School and a former official at EPA under President Obama, says that could be an issue for the Trump administration.

LISA HEINZERLING: I think a lot of people have been struck by the real thinness of the proposals coming out of the agency that would repeal the rules that are in place.

ROTT: She points to Pruitt's proposal to change fuel economy standards. She calls it shoddy. The document, she says, was 38 pages long. The Obama administration's justification for the standards was more than a thousand pages. At least a couple of EPA's actions have already been blocked by courts. Still, some supporters of Pruitt say that he's learned from those earlier missteps and is now being more thorough. Ellen Steen, the general counsel for the American Farm Bureau Federation, is waiting for Pruitt to overhaul a major water rule. And she says, yeah, it's taking a long time, but that's a good thing.

ELLEN STEEN: They are realizing that to do things right takes time, and they're going through a thoughtful process. And we want that because we want what comes out at the end of the day to be something that is thoughtful.

ROTT: And something that will stand up in court. Nathan Rott, NPR News.

Washington Post

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2018/05/10/epa-signals-it-will-ban-toxic-chemical-found-in-paint-strippers/?utm_term=.282589a4f6de

EPA signals it will ban toxic chemical found in paint strippers

By Dino Grandoni and Brady Dennis, 5/10/18, 3:56 PM

The Environmental Protection Agency signaled on Thursday it will follow through on an Obama-era proposal to ban paint strippers containing a toxic chemical – leaving lawmakers, environmental groups and the families of victims cautiously optimistic.

Since taking office, Pruitt has been laser-focused on undoing environmental and safety rules proposed by President Barack Obama's administration. But the EPA's announcement that it "intends to finalize" a proposed ban on methylene chloride would be the exception.

"Today's announcement demonstrates EPA's commitment to finalize the methylene chloride rule-making," EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox said in a statement.

The chemical, used by professional contractors and do-it-yourselfers to remove paint, has been linked to dozens of deaths – including 12 people between 2000 and 2011 who specialize in refinishing bathtubs, according to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report.

But advocates of the ban reserved full-throated cheers until the rule's language is made public and submitted to the White House's Office of Management and Budget, which the EPA said will happen "shortly."

Sarah Vogel, vice president for health at the Environmental Defense Fund, said the nonprofit advocacy group was "encouraged" by the EPA's decision but urged the agency to move quickly to formally block the access to the chemical.

"We and families across this country will be watching closely to make sure this administration actually delivers on today's promise from Administrator Pruitt," Vogel said. "We will delay any celebration until paint strippers containing this deadly chemical are actually off the market."

The EPA first proposed banning the use of methylene chloride in paint and coating removal products in the waning days of Obama's second term. A year earlier, Congress had granted the EPA new powers to restrict the use of that and other chemicals in an amendment to the 1976 Toxic Substances Control Act, the nation's main chemical safety law.

But in December, the Pruitt's EPA indefinitely postponed bans on certain uses of methylene chloride and two other deadly chemicals often found in consumer products. For a time, it seemed like the ban was headed to the trash bin, along with many other Obama-era rules after President Trump's election.

That delay in December kicked off an effort to salvage it.

Several Democratic lawmakers asked Pruitt about the chemical and urged him to ban it in a pair of hearings on Capitol Hill last month. Rep. Frank Pallone (D-N.Y.) invoked the deaths of Drew Wynne and Joshua Atkins, who both died from methylene chloride exposure. Pallone asked Pruitt if he had anything to say to those families given the lack of EPA action.

Pruitt didn't directly address that question, but he made clear that the agency hadn't abandoned its evaluation of the chemical's safety. "There has been no decision at this time," he said at the April 26 hearing.

That did little to satisfy Pallone. "Look, you say you're going to do something, but these chemicals are still on the shelves, and they make a mockery of [chemical reform] legislation that this committee works so hard on," Pallone said. "And it makes a mockery of EPA. You have the power immediately to get this chemical off the shelves. And you're not doing it. And you should do it."

Later that day, another Democrat from New York, Rep. Nita Lowey, accused Pruitt of "strategically starving programs that identify chemicals that could be harmful to children, while rolling back and delaying regulations for deadly chemicals."

Pruitt replied that the agency was reviewing the comments of the proposal to ban the chemical. "I take this issue very seriously," he said.

The lobbying effort also continued behind the scenes.

After the hearings, the Environmental Defense Fund contacted Pruitt's office on behalf of the families of Wynne and Kevin Hartley, another man who died from methylene chloride exposure. The group asked for a meeting with the administrator.

"I wanted to use Kevin's story to try to save more lives," Wendy Hartley, Kevin's mother, told The Washington Post in an interview. "We do not need any more lives lost due to this. And if I could tell Kevin's story and get someone to listen to it and do something about, then I was willing to tell his story."

Pruitt has met with few environmental groups throughout his tenure, more often conferring with industry representatives. But he agreed to meet with the mothers.

So this past Tuesday morning, Wendy Hartley, along with Cindy Wynne and her other son Brian Wynne, met Pruitt and several of his aides at his office in EPA headquarters.

The families brought with them photographs and the death certificates of the two men, and explained to Pruitt what happened to them.

Wynne, 31, was running a cold-brew coffee business in Charleston, S.C., when he died last year while stripping paint from the floor of a walk-in refrigerator using a product called Goof Off. Hartley, 21, was a trained contractor who died last year while refinishing a bathtub with White Lightning Low Odor Stripper near Nashville. Both men both were wearing respirators when they died.

Pruitt "was very attentive to us," Cindy Wynne told The Post in an interview earlier this week before the EPA's announcement. "He was somewhat surprised when we showed him the cans from Lowe's," where her son had purchased the paint stripper.

Her son, Brian, asked Pruitt if he agreed that methylene chloride was a problem. Pruitt responded, "I do."

But when pressed on whether he would finalize the ban, the administrator did not make a commitment, the family members said.

"We all have the same sense that for a moment there, we felt like there was positive momentum," Brian Wynne said. "And then that went out of the room pretty quickly when he was steadfast against the word 'ban.' "

In an interview after the announcement Thursday, the brother said he was now "cautiously optimistic" that Pruitt would follow through.

"This is a positive development," Brian Wynne said. "It was a surprising one. We certainly didn't see this coming in our meeting with Administrator Pruitt. But we're certainly encouraged by this sign that he seems ready to take action."

The EPA said the "meeting with the families was constructive."

"It provided the families the opportunity to share with Administrator Pruitt the circumstances in each of their cases and the Administrator the opportunity to hear directly from them," Wilcox said. "There was an exchange of ideas, and we appreciate EDF reaching out to request the meeting."

Public health and environmental groups were also pleased but cautioned that more work needs to be done. Vogel urged the EPA to "move quickly to implement a ban, and that includes ensuring necessary administrative procedures are followed to guarantee a permanent ban and that these products are promptly removed from store shelves."

The EPA said it will not redo a 2014 risk assessments that determined inhaling the paint-stripping fumes is dangerous. "The agency is not reevaluating the paint stripping uses of methylene chloride, but relying on its previous risk assessments and working diligently to ensure the safety of chemicals in the marketplace," it said.

On Thursday, Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.), the top Democrat on the Environment and Public Works Committee, called the EPA's announcement "welcome news, especially after the agency previously delayed finalization of this proposed ban indefinitely."

"I am also encouraged that the agency is relying on previous risk assessments that clearly and scientifically showed just how threatening products containing methylene chloride could be to people's health and safety," Carper added in a statement. "However, just like a law doesn't mean much if it is not enforced, intentions to finalize a ban on a deadly chemical don't mean much if that chemical stays on the shelves."

The American Chemistry Council, the main trade association for U.S. chemical companies, greeted the move with muted acceptance.

"EPA has authority to move ahead on specific conditions of use," spokesman Jon Corley said in a statement. "ACC supports EPA's completion of the risk management rule-making on methylene chloride and publication of a final rule."

Methylene chloride can kill either through direct narcosis or through metabolization into carbon monoxide, which binds to hemoglobin in the blood and inhibits oxygen from moving around the body. Exposure to as little as six ounces can kill, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

The heavier-than-air chemical can pool in places with poor ventilation, like bathrooms. "But now we're seeing more and more cases in other types of confined spaces," said Lindsay McCormick, a project manager for EDF's health program.

In 1997, OSHA issued its own restriction on the chemical's use in workplaces. But those standards did not cover regular consumers, who can buy methylene chloride products at most hardware stores.

AP

<https://apnews.com/b69be1b066074020ae040b14d9722c78/EPA-study-finds-arsenic,-lead-in-canyon-near-Salt-Lake-City>

EPA study finds arsenic, lead in canyon near Salt Lake City

5/11/18

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — A report says elevated levels of some heavy metals could pose a threat to people who frequently use parts of American Fork Canyon outside Salt Lake City.

The Environmental Protection Agency says researchers found arsenic and lead levels exceeding recommended levels for hikers, campers and ATV riders who visit the area often over long periods.

The Daily Herald reports the findings are attributed to waste rock and tailing piles from mining during the 1800s and early 1900s on property now owned by the U.S. Forest Service and Snowbird Ski and Summer Resort.

The preliminary assessment, released in March, is a first-step look at whether cleanup is needed.

EPA site assessment manager Ryan Dunham says the main concern is for people visiting the area year after year, not one-time visitors.

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